



TOOLKIT 24 · LABORATORY QUALITY · TOOL 1 OF 4

Sample Labelling and Rejection Rules

What must be on every tube, what the laboratory will not accept, and why the rules are strict: a mislabelled sample is a wrong result for two patients

Labelling — at the bedside, after the patient states their identity

On every tube, by hand or bedside printer	On the request form
Full name · date of birth · unique number · date and time of collection · collector's initials · sample type if not obvious	Same identifiers · tests requested · clinical details · requesting doctor · ward · urgency · relevant medicines (anticoagulants, antibiotics) · time of last dose for drug levels

Never: label tubes before collection · label away from the bedside · label from the request form or from memory · use a pre-printed label for a sample someone else took · leave an unlabelled tube "to do later". Blood-bank samples (Toolkit 21): handwritten from the wristband, always.

The laboratory rejects

Reason	Action
Unlabelled, or missing any of name, DOB, unique number	Rejected; new sample; incident form
Any mismatch between tube and form (name, number, DOB)	Rejected; new sample; incident form
Wrong tube or additive for the test	Rejected; new sample
Haemolysed (potassium, LDH, AST unreliable), clotted (haematology), lipaemic	Rejected or reported with a comment, per test; new sample requested
Insufficient volume; leaking; broken	Rejected; new sample
Delay beyond the test's stability limit; wrong temperature in transit	Rejected; new sample
Irreplaceable sample (CSF, tissue, sample before a transfusion) with a minor labelling error	Not rejected: the collector attends the laboratory, verifies and corrects on the form in the presence of laboratory staff; the report carries a comment; incident form

Rejection log: date	Ward	Sample	Reason	Informed (who, time)	Recollected ☐
					☐
					☐
					☐
					☐
					☐

Monthly: rejection rate by ward and reason (target < 1 %); fed back to the wards. Adapted from WHO Laboratory Quality Management System handbook.

ASF standards: Hospital Standard 4 — laboratory pre-analytical safety (means of verification: rejection log, rate by ward); Universal Floor — identification